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121 packed clearing amid a grove of trees. Myers is slightly
115 stooped from rheumatism and wears two brass wires around
(157) his ankles to help relieve the pain in his legs. His African-
born grandmother, Bina, "tell me how she get heah on a big
boat an she lan down theah on Cumberland Ilun on a big
dock." He tells the visitors how the slaveholders "broke"
(567) newly enslaved Africans by confining them in a log house,
chaining them to iron rings in the floor:

> They chained them wile Africans theah till they wuz tame. They'd take em out one by one and they'd give em a stick an put em in the fiel with people wut knowd how tuh wuk an that way they lun how too. They sked to give em a hoe. It's shahp and they might frail roun with it.

Look at his picture. A big, barefoot, very black man with a fringe of white beard, Jim Myers is a living link between Georgia and Africa.

121 FROM THEIR ENCOUNTERS with Katie Brown, Tony William Delegal, Henry Williams, and Jim Myers—and with 134 other people like them in twenty locations over a three-year period—the fieldworkers of the Savannah Unit of the Federal Writers Project fashioned a series of haunting portraits in words and pictures of coastal black Georgians. Their book, *Drums and Shadows*, is aimed at a general audience. It is organized by community and is presented in a straightforward narrative spiced with long quotations in a readable literary adaptation of the black Georgians' speech. It is filled with rich examples of Afro-American folklore.

128 *Drums and Shadows* presents much information on folk speech and naming patterns, including the use of day names
• (192) and the folk etymology of Gullah. Here are examples of numerous African words used in coastal Georgia. Here is *deloe*

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(water), *juba haltuh* (water bucket), *sisure* (chicken), *gombay* (cow), *nyana* (fish), *flim* (pancakes), *mosojo* (pot), *diffy* (fire), *nyam* (eat), *mulafo* (whiskey), and *musongo* (tobacco). Here are *ma-foo-bey* (an expression of surprise) and the expletive *skinskon*. Here are folk narratives of Buh Rabbit, mysterious spiders, magic hoes, landing Ibos, flying Africans, and various supernatural spirits. Here are African songs—*a-shou-tu-goula*, the lullaby *nikki-yimi, nikki-yimi*, and the refrain *yeribum, yeribum, yeribum, by*. Here is the ballad of Bo-cat, the wife murderer. Here is instrumental music on banjos, bones, drums, and gourds. And here are such dances as the Buzzard Lope, the Camel Walk, Come Down to the Mire, the Fish Bone, the Fish Tail, and the Snake Hip. Here are examples of folk religion in descriptions of Moslem ancestors and African prayer rituals. Here are the chanted *Belambi, Hackabera, Ameela, Mahamadu*, and *Ameen, Ameen, Ameen* during prayers, followed by *Meena, mino, mo* at the end of prayers, and *Kum buba yali kum buba tambe, kum kunka yali, kum kunka tembe*, said before flying back to Africa. Here are river baptisms, and sermons, and guest appearances by Father Divine and Daddy Grace. Other folk beliefs are exemplified in conjure bags and conjure doctors, graveyard dirt, mojoes, such charms as Adam and Eve Root, Black Cat Bone, Lucky Heart, and High John the Conqueror. Here are examples of customary folklore in birth customs and death customs as well as festival celebrations. And here are descriptions of material culture, including folk architecture and such foodways as the use of benne seeds, palm cabbage and palm wine, palmetto cabbage and palmetto wine, peanuts, ashcakes, and African rice cakes. Among the folk crafts produced by black coastal Georgians are baskets, beads, bowls and utensils, musical instruments, walking sticks, and carved wooden spoons.

In its concentration on local folklore *Drums and Shadows* was pursuing a policy encouraged by the national office of the Federal Writers' Project. An agency of the New Deal's Work

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115 of schooling as evinced by her diction. She is a devout member of the Adventist Church, her day of worship coming on Saturday instead of the customary Sunday, a day observed and anticipated by the average Negro.

791 "Silvia Higgins," Esther testified, "wuz a medium. She
795 talked with spirits all huh life.[56a, b] She used the rapping signal. I myself have seen the work and acts of spirits. I've seen cheahs and tables move about a room. And I've seen a woman and a boy come intuh my yahd and then disappeah, and I know that the woman wuz dead. The boy wuz not dead but wuz not anywheah in this vicinity. Silvia Higgins wuz my mothuh. She has been dead thirty-two yeahs."

115 One of the most interesting Negroes in this settlement is Tonie Houston,* an old preacher, extremely gracious of manner and eager to be of help.

"I bin yuh in dis town fo dey wuz no big buildings an duh streets wuz all dut an deah wuz no pavement."

829 "Do you remember any of the people brought over from Africa?" we asked.

(551) "Yas, I know heaps ub um. Deah wuz 'Golla' John Wiley, Golla' Jim Bayfield—he wuz bought by Mahse Chahles Lamar, and he sole im to Mr. McMullen. Den deah wuz 'Golla' Jack, 'Golla' Tom, 'Golla' Silvie, 'Golla' Chahles Carr, 'Golla' Bob, Chahlotte, Cain, an Jeanette, an 'Golla' Alice. Dey wuz all bought by Mr. McMullen."

(101) When asked the meaning of so many "Gollas," he replied, "All duh people wut come frum Africa aw obuhseas wuz call 'Golla,' and dey talk wuz call 'Golla' talk." His knowledge of their language, gained by association with the Afri-
(192) cans, was scant. Among the words he remembered were *musungo* tobacco, *mulafo* whiskey, and *sisure* chicken. A cow was called *gombay* [25g] and a hog *gulluh*.

(322) To questions regarding the utensils, such as buckets, tubs,

*Tonie Houston, Tatemville.

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829 Hestuh she Shad's gran. Yuh knows Shad? Bentoo she duh younges. Magret she my gran."

We asked if Belali Mohomet had been related to Belali Sullivan on St. Simons.

"I ain know bout St. Simon but Cotto use tuh talk bout cousin Belali Sullivan.

"Yes'm, I membuh muh gran too. Belali he frum Africa but muh gran she come by Bahamas. She speak funny wuds
829 we didn know. She say 'mosojo' an sometime 'sojo' wen she mean pot. Fuh watuh she say 'deloe' an fuh fyuh she say
• 192 'diffy.' She tell us, 'Tak sojo off diffy.'

"Wen sumpm done she say, 'Bim-boga-rum.' Yuh tell uh sumpm wut is a suhprise lak somebody die, den she say, 'Ma-foo-bey, ma-foo-bey.'

829 "She ain tie uh head up lak I does, but she weah a loose wite clawt da she trow obuh uh head lak veil an it hang loose on uh shoulduh. I ain know wy she weah it dataway, but I tink she ain lak a tight ting roun uh head.

829 "She make funny flat cake she call 'saraka.' She make
252 um same day ebry yeah, an it big day. Wen dey finish, she call us in, all duh chillun, an put in hans lill flat cake an we eats it. Yes'm, I membuh how she make it. She wash rice, an po off all duh watuh. She let wet rice sit all night, an in mawnin rice is all swell. She tak dat rice an put it in wooden mawtuh, an beat it tuh paste wid wooden pestle. She add honey, sometime shuguh, an make it in flat cake wid uh hans. 'Saraka' she call um."

412 Before the cabin stood a crudely constructed wooden mortar made many years before by Katie's husband and used originally for the pounding of rice. A deep basin-like aperture had been hewn out of the center of a log which was about three feet long and from eighteen to twenty inches wide.[43]

115 Across the dusty road from Katie Brown's another nar-

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ain weah no cloze, he say, but a leedle clawt string roun em.

"William say dat dey ain hab much trouble gittin tings tuh eat in Africa cuz so much grow free. Dey cut duh tree an let duh suhrup drain out. Duh women tie duh leedle chillun an duh babies on tuh deah back tuh carry em roun.

"He say wen dey come in duh boats tuh ketch em, dey trail a red flag an dey ain use tuh see red an das duh way dey git duh load. William he talk funny talk. He hab funny wud fuh tings. I use tuh know some ub em, cuz he teach em tuh me but it so long, missus, Ise fuhgit. But I membuh he say pot call 'sojo' an watuh 'deloe' an he call fyuh 'diffy.' He sho did dat, but das all I kin membuh. Ef uh study bout em, maybe I kin membuh some mo."

We wanted a description of William, the African.

"William a good size man, heaby set. He hab two leedle line mahk on he right cheek." [14]

Ryna mused: "Tings is sho change. Wen we is young, we use tuh hab big frolic an dance in a ring an shout tuh drum. Sometime we hab rattle made out uh dry goad an we rattle em an make good music." [23, 25]

We wondered if she, too, remembered the Buzzard Lope and she assured us, "Yes'm, sho I knows it. Ebrybody knows it." [17]

Shortly afterward the conversation turned to conjure and the old woman told us, "I sho heah pleuty bout da ting. Way back we hab plenty discussion bout root makuhs.[22, 48] I membuh my huzbun Hillard Johnson speak bout a root makuh in Darien wut make duh pot bile widout fyuh. My huzbun he frum Sapelo. He could tell yuh bout sech tings ef he wuz libin."

A short distance away lived Charles Hunter,* whose small board house was set well back from the road. The front yard enclosed by a wire fence was planted with a profusion of brightly colored flowers along the sandy walk leading to

* *Charles Hunter, Harrington, St. Simons Island.*

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534 sho it wuz maple. He stretch em obuh it good. It wuz bout eighteen inches wide an fifteen inches deep wen he finish it. He beat it wid a stick. Ole man Okra he sho kin chase a drum. Ole man Jesse he frum Africa, too, an he make he own drum."

829 When we asked Ben if he remembered any African words, he replied, "I know dat deah wuz a ole man, it bin so long I caahn relate his name, at duh plantation wut wehn roun wid ole man Okra an I membuh well he call all duh fish an ting uh duh ribbuh by duh name uh 'nyana' an den I heah pancake call 'flim.' Muh granmothuh Hettie, duh mothuh uh muh mothuh Bella, he come from Africa too an he huzbun come frum Africa. He name wuz Alex Boyd. Alex wuz bery small felluh but heaby an he hab dahk skin an shahp-feechuch. Yes, ma'am, he talk African but he stuttuh so he dohn talk much roun us chillun, cuz we make fun at im, an as I say befo, I wuz small lad den. Alex wuz knock-kneed an he tie he head up in a clawt."

829 Had his grandmother, Hettie, ever talked to him about Africa, we wanted to know.

Ben told us, "Many time. He tell some tings I membuh. He say he mus be bout tutteen aw foeteen wen dey bring im frum Africa. He say deah wuz great talk bout comin tuh dis country an some men tell em it would take only two aw tree days tuh git deah. Dey wuz all happy tuh come. Him an lot uh friens come tuhgedduh.

"Wen Hettie fus come, he say he feel worried cuz he couldn unnuhstan duh talk yuh an many udduh tings bein so diffunt frum he own country. He hab two sistuhs an tree brothuhs but dey couldn git a chance tuh come. He hab mo refrence tuh he mothuh dan tuh he fathuh. An he say dat in Africa he lib in a 'groun house.' It wuz a squeah house, an he say dat he didn lib close tuh a salt ribbuh but weah deah wuz a lot uh wile swamp. Wen he fus come tuh dis country, he didn unnuhstan bout fish. But he tell a lot bout monkey

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major comprehension barriers to speakers of the standard language. On the other hand, while a creole language also results from social and regional variations, a creole is similar to the primary language mainly in vocabulary; it differs in features of syntax and phonology to the extent that the creole and the primary language may be mutually unintelligible.

Secondly, despite the common West African ancestry of speakers of black English dialect, Gullah, and other creoles, isolation has tended to protect the Africanisms in the islanders' speech. As noted in Chapter 1, blacks are still in a majority on most of the Sea Islands and still enjoy the effects of both isolation and majority status. The impact of outside forces is not yet intense enough in most places to modify greatly the traditional, socially cohesive customs. And Gullah still thrives as the language of familiarity in the Sea Island communities. Even the few white families that have long made their homes on the islands speak Gullah, and readily admit to speaking it. Most native-born white islanders say they learned Gullah as a first language from their parents, neighbors, and island playmates.

The third and perhaps most important distinction between Gullah and black dialect is in vocabulary. True, the lexicon of Gullah, like that of black dialect, is composed primarily of English words. Even so, there are a host of African-derived words in Gullah, some of which are generally unknown to inland black speakers, for example:

gula, "pig": Kongo
goober, "peanut": Kimbundu
gumbo, "okra": Tshiluba
gumbi, "medicinal weed": Bambara
heh, "yes": Vai
hoodoo, "bad luck": Hausa
yambi, "yam": Vai
chigger, "small flea": Wolof
juk, juky, "disorderly": Wolof
cush, "bread," "cake": Hausa
nana, "elderly woman," "grandmother": Twi
nansi, "spider": Twi
tote, "to carry": Kikongo
chicabod, "seesaw": Mandingo
unu, "you": Igbo
yent, "to lie": Umbundu
pinto, bento, "coffin": Temne
biddy, "small chicken": Kongo
buckra, "white man": Ibebio
de, "to be": Igbo
eh, "yes": Igbo
ashantie, "house": Ga[10]

Most of the islanders still have two kinds of given names: one used within the Sea Island community and one used in outside transactions. Mozi, Misy, Maima, Kutsey, Kisi, Lunza, Masa, Yatta, and Cuineque

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rest you mouth!: shut up!
long eye: envy

Most linguists agree that lexicon is perhaps one of the most arbitrary features that languages borrow from one another, and it is in this area that they tend to borrow most extensively. As Talmy Givón has explained, when different linguistic groups come in contact, it is natural that the area of most acute linguistic conflict will be the lexicon; by borrowing words from each other, speakers resolve the communication conflict. But languages seldom borrow grammar.[13] Thus, in areas where Gullah is spoken, it is well to understand that while the lexicon is primarily English, much of the underlying grammar is rooted in West African languages.

In detailed analysis of Gullah I have used Walt Wolfram's "matrix of cruciality," selecting for discussion those features still persistent in Gullah speech.[14] Every effort has been made to present very technical material as nontechnically as possible, in order to assist readers in understanding peculiarities of Gullah speech, not only to help them appreciate the language but to suggest something of the rhythm and flow of the narratives and tales, a quality which, as I have noted, cannot be captured on paper.

Features of Grammar

Many characteristic features of grammar and syntax set Gullah apart from other varieties of African-American speech.[15] Unlike standard English, which relies heavily on subordination to convey relationships between ideas, contemporary Gullah relies on coordination, or the combination of sentences that are short, abrupt, and loosely strung together. Gullah thus dispenses with many of the prepositions, conjunctions, adjectives, adverbs, and participles that tie together complex standard English sentences. In addition, the relationships between sentences are not necessarily specified through grammatical operations but may be left to be inferred from the usage or context.

The verb and pronoun systems are particularly distinctive in Gullah. Some distinguishing features of the verb structure include the uninflected verb, verb serialization, the introductory verb *say* [se], the complementizer *for* [fə], and verb reduplication.

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There is continuity, too, in the religious services. Worship is shared with others who appreciate the place of religious exercises in the traditional structure of beliefs and values. The services continue to be alive, energetic, and thoroughly enjoyable. Sermons and prayers are still passed on orally from one generation to the next, rather than written down. The sermons are delivered by ministers who are natives of the island area, who speak the language, and who value the old traditions.

Basketry and marketing remain important, for two reasons. They have economic significance, but pride has also become a factor. The children learning the basket traditions now are being told that the patterns they are weaving repeat not only the patterns woven by their grandparents but those of their African ancestors before them.

Fishing and netting continue to provide livelihoods for many, though they are endangered by development and pollution of the waters. The islanders are "river and ocean" people. They gauge their workdays by the sun and by the ebb and flow of the tides. Some continue to use the marsh mud to fertilize their gardens. Others go to the banks of the ocean recesses to sit, fish, and tell tales of Ber Rabbit, tales often so vivid that many of the children swear they have actually seen him bounding down the island paths. The fishing techniques and the love and respect for the ocean are being passed on to the children along with the tales, myths, lies, and legends of island life.

The folklore and literature of the Sea Islands, unsurprisingly, are more alive on the remote islands than on the more commercialized ones. Though television, with its cartoon characters and talking pictures, is an arch rival for even the most gifted teller, on stormy days and dark, gloomy nights no one is permitted to watch television because the islanders believe that it draws electricity and increases the possibility that their homes could be struck by lightning. During these times the children are gathered and told tales of Ber Rabbit, hants, ghosts, witches, and hags, and no television program can hold an audience as spellbound as some of the island storytellers.

Gullah, the island language, is being affected by population changes, television, and the schools. Children are seldom named after days of the week any more, but most are still given two names: one to use at school and one to use at home. Many of the words familiar to the older generations are not being passed on to the children because the islanders, like most parents, want their children to attain good educa-

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tions, and a good education does not include the old vocabulary. The children do, however, still learn to speak and understand Gullah: they return home from school and community to extended families where older members are responsible for their discipline and training; the church services are rendered in an elite variety of Gullah; the schoolteachers are from the islands and often chastise the children in Gullah; and most of all, the islanders are in a majority and Gullah, not standard English or a variety thereof, is the accepted language of the community. In the near future, therefore, some version of Gullah will probably continue to exist as the language of the home and of the community.

Finally, the islanders remain as conservative about their culture as they ever were. As I have noted, they are hostile to strangers, and word of outsiders carries quickly. No one, black, white, or otherwise, can escape their cultural interrogations. They will want to know who each newcomer is, and why this person has arrived. But it is not true, I learned, that the islanders will remain hostile. Once one establishes oneself within a community (which often takes years to do), one will receive all possible warmth and hospitality and all the help one might need to carry out one's work.

In writing this book I promised to tell the story of the islanders as I saw it, and to the best of my ability, that is what I have done.

The end of that one!

[p. 150 is blank]

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10. The African derivations of these words are from Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*.

11. For a critical appraisal of Turner's methodology see P. E. H. Hair, "Sierra Leone Items in the Gullah Dialect of American English," *African Language Review* 4 (1965): 79–84.

12. DeCamp, Foreword to Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*, pp. vii–viii.

13. For a detailed discussion of the processes involved in language contact see Talmy Givón, "Prolegomena to Any Creology" (Department of Linguistics, University of California, Los Angeles, Mimeo, 1973).

14. According to Wolfram (personal communication), the "matrix of cruciality" refers to linguistic features that are important to control in situations where one would be expected to use a form of standard English.

15. For a fuller syntactical analysis of Gullah than follows here, see Cunningham, "Syntactic Analysis." See Jones-Jackson, "The Status of Gullah," for a full representation of creole features in context.

16. See Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*, p. 225.

17. See Dietrich Westerman and M. A. Bryan, *The Languages of West Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952).

18. Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*, p. 211.

19. See Nichols, "Linguistic Change in Gullah," for a detailed discussion and historical analysis of the complementizer *for*.

20. J. L. Dillard, *Black English* (New York: Random House, 1972).

Appendix 1

1. Jackson, Slaughter, and Blake, "The Sea Islands as a Cultural Resource."

Appendix 3

1. For a full discussion of the phonemes in Gullah, see Jones-Jackson, "The Status of Gullah," and Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*.

Appendix 4

1. All quotations in this appendix are from the film documentary *When Roots Die*, produced by me in conjunction with WHMM TV at Howard University and the South Carolina ETV network. I owe special thanks to Charles Sessoms, who helped to write and who directed the film. Likewise, I am indebted to Henry Cauthens, director of the South Carolina ETV network, for providing a crew (Patrice Abrams, Jimmy Dinkins, and Joe Bowie) to undertake the filming in South Carolina; and to Edward Hawthorne, dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, and Arnold Wallace, general manager of WHMM TV, Howard University, for providing the funds.

2. Robert Browne, founder of the National Emergency Land Fund and research scholar for the Black Economic Research Center (personal communication).

[p. 178 is blank]

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193 Preceded by a vowel an initial *y* sound is added to *i*
194 and *e*. Thus *iz* and *ent* become *yiz* and *yent*. *Him is*, but *'e yiz; him ent*, but *'e yent; 'e yeye red.*.

Initial *s* is dropped in the hard consonant combinations *sc, sp, sk, st.*

'Cratch, 'crape, 'kin, 'corch, 'tan, 'tink, 'take, 'tir, 'top, 'ting, 'tep, 'ticky, 'traight, 'tring, 'tretch-out, 'tir, 'pin, 'pat, 'pit, 'plash, 'pend, 'tore.

Prefixes

193 Most one-syllable prefixes are dropped, as *at-, o-, ap-, e-, re-, op-, ad-, ex-, dis-, as-, con-*, etc.

'Ten, 'tenshun (for attend or intend, attention, intention), 'pinion (opinion), 'pint, 'pintment (appoint, appointment), 'pistle (epistle), 'jeck' (reject, object), 'tack, 'taguhnize (antagonize), 'mirashun (admiration), 'scusshun (excursion), 'spishun, 'spize, 'splain, 'spon', 'spose (suppose, expose), 'spute, 'stonish, 'stead'ub (instead of), 'stracted, 'struckshun (construction, destruction).

The prefix *re-* is the favorite, being sometimes retained when the others are dropped, and frequently being substituted for other less euphonious prefixes:

Recishun (for decision); refen' (defend), remonia (pneumonia), renite (unite), repeah (appear), repose (oppose), resplain (explain), refen ('fen', defend). "Anoint" becomes *'nint*, but the pastor is the *Lord's renointed.*

Survivals (Archaisms)

• 192 *Fo'punce* and *seb'npunce chickens*, to indicate the size of a chicken sold for those amounts before the Revolutionary War.

Coz, cuz, or *cuzn* as a form of address, like the Elizabethan "coz".

Jook in the sense of jab or jabbed.

Tittie or *tittuh* for sister.

Toad for a young female dog.

Tosty, as a diminutive of "toad," as a humorous nickname for man or woman.

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Tetch, for remnant. "T'engk Gawd, 'e lef' uh leetle tetch een de bottle."

Tas' (*task*), one hundred and five feet square, one quarter of an acre, the daily task on sea-island cotton plantations." Used now as either a measure of area or of distance. "My gun kin shoot two tas'," i.e. 210 feet or 70 yards.

Use in the sense of "frequent certain feeding grounds, be accustomed to go, linger habitually about.""

Yowe for ewe.

Frail, to strike, to beat.

Ax for ask."

Piggin, a small cedar pail with one panel extended for a handle.

Pyo' for "pure," in the sense of "fully, absolutely"; modern slang, "nothing else but": *de pyo' nutt'n*.

Staa't-naked, instead of "stark-naked.""

Quile for coil.

Find, in the sense of "to supply with victuals." "Buh Sun promise Buh Fowl-hawk fuh fine um een bittle effn 'e ketch 'im een 'im baid."

Quills, still used for pipes of reed or cane.

Shote, for young hog.

Killick, for "killock," an anchor of stone.

Gaul for swamp.

"Mr. Bennett explains a "task" as one-half an acre for a hoe hand; three-quarters of an acre for a cotton-field hand; one-quarter of an acre for a rice-field hand. Thus a man and his family can *cut a tass; tie a tass, an' carry a tass intuh de flat*. From this comes the phrase, a *done-tass niggah*, for a worn out laborer, too weak or too old to work; or lightly, for the laughing darkey, his day's work done and his hoe canted over his shoulder. I, 343.

"Widely employed throughout the South by both white and black, usually as a hunting term in connection with doves, partridges, and turkeys. Dignified Elizabethan. Compare Spenser's "Where never foot did use", and Milton's Lycidas,

"Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use,
Of shades and wanton winds and gushing brooks."

Listed along with *quile* (coil) and *pawn* as colloquial white usage by Charles Foster Smith in "Southern Dialect in Life and Literature," *The Southern Bivouac*, Nov., 1885.

"Good Chaucerian and Caxtonian; standard English till 1600; still used in the Midland and Southern Dialects in England; and in general much easier and pleasanter to say than "ask".

"It is barely possible (but highly improbable) that *staa't* goes back to the older "start" (steort), tail.

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192 [278] *Hippo* for ipecac, probably from the dialect of the cockney English sailors who fetched it home from the Brazils. The British pharmacopoeia of 1725 calls it "hippocachuana, hippechachuana, hippo for short."

Gaum (or *gorm*), to daub or smear with spilled victuals and grease; similarly *gaumandize* (*gormandize*) not to eat greasily, but to daub or to spatter oneself with food.

Proper Names (Onomatopeia)

192 825 *Bloody noun*, the big swamp bull-frog.

Fry-bakin' frog, the small pond-frog, supposed to say "fry bacon," "tea-table."

Higguhri-hee and *Cuckatoo*, both being terms for the great horned owl.

192 *Nickuhdemus*, *Buhrabbus*, and *Polydo'*, all favorite, mouth-filling names, common in sermons and religious arguments: "Ent de Scriptuh say een de fo'teen chaptuh een Nickuhdemus, dat de lab'ruth wut' 'e hire?"

Rebus is of unknown origin, being coupled only with Revelation, meaning from Alpha to Omega: "Uh bin t'ru da' t'ing frum Rebus spang to Rebelashun."

(825) *Po'Jo*, the long-legged, long-necked Blue Heron.

Popular Etymologies

Consecrate lye (*concentrated*);" *middle-night*, *middle-day*, *middle-blouse*, for mid-night, mid-day, middy-blouse; *inflummashun*, for information; *sparruhgrass* for asparagus;" *Sawlketchum* for Salkahatchie, a tide-water river of South Carolina, for which the commoner corruption among the whites is "Saltcatcher"; *preecher on de sukkus* (circuit); *locus preechuh* (local preacher); *petty-* or *patty-auguh* for piragua, pirogue; *Saa'bint Day* (Servant's day) confused with Sabbath Day; *muffle-dice* for hermaphrodite; *grin' salt*, said of a hawk or vulture circling aloft; *carryin'* for carrion; *peach omelet* for peach marmalade; *curly flower* for cauliflower;" *Florida lime* for chloride of lime; *sweet religion* for sweet alyssum;" *nutten-aigs* for nut-megs.

"Not exclusively Gullah; commonly found elsewhere.

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192 538 In connection with *nutten-aigs* Mr. Bennett vouches for an anecdote which is almost too good to be true: In a certain house in Charleston, dessert came on the table, looking and tasting peculiar. "Judy," said the mistress, "What is the matter with this pudding? Did you put three eggs in it?"

"Yas, missus, me yiz. Yo' tell me fuh tek t'ree aig; dey yunt bin no hen-aig, so me yiz tek de nutt'n-aigs."

Words

192 There are curiously few survivals of native African words in Gullah, a fact that has struck most students of the language.[a] The commonest are the exclamation *hi* (or *kai*) to express wonder or to add emphasis to a state[ment] and *buckra* for white man, both, however, being widely found elsewhere. To these may be added *nyam*, *oona*, *swanga* (or *swongger*), *du-du*, *goober*, *pinder*, *cooter*, *okra*, *geechy*, *cymbi*, *bakalingo* (obsolescent), *guffer*, *penepne*, *da*, *da-da*. *Malafee* for whiskey has been noted on St. Helena Island.[b] Mrs. Christensen records several African phrases or formulas in her stories.[c] Two words that have not been traced to any known source, and which may be African in origin, are *Stepney* and *Plat-eye*. *Stepney* is

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[a] Parsons, *Folk Lore of the Sea Islands, South Carolina*, Intro., XXI.
Bennett, I, 338.
George Phillip Krapp, "The English of the Negro," *American Mercury*, June, 1924, p. 193.
In Professor Krapp's opinion the English of the Negro has not retained a trace of native African speech, and has added only a few words to the language, such as *voodoo*, *hoodoo*, and *buckra*. "Generalizations are always dangerous," he continues, "but it is reasonably safe to say that not a single detail of Negro pronunciation or of Negro syntax can be proved to have any other than an English origin."

[191] Of Gullah in particular he says: "The Gullah dialect is a very much simplified form of English, with cases, numbers, genders, tenses reduced almost to the vanishing point. Many of the grammatical and phonetic characteristics that appear in other jargons, Beach-la-Mar, Pidgin English, and Chinook, are found also in Gullah. Very little of the dialect, however, perhaps none of it, is derived from sources other than English. In vocabulary, in syntax, and in pronunciation, practically all of the forms of Gullah can be explained on the basis of English, and probably only a little deeper delving would be necessary to account for those characteristics that still seem strange and mysterious."

[b] Parsons, *Folk Lore of the Sea Islands*, Intro., XXI.

[539] "Sarsey Bey cum blunda!
Tung cum blunda!
(From the story of the "Cooter an' Deer".)

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•192 used in the sense of hunger or want, or like the proverbial wolf: "Haffuh wu'k haa'd fuh keep Stepney frum de do'." [175] *Plat-eye* signifies a ghastly and ghostly night apparition which it is extremely dangerous, even fatal, to meet or see, common to the Georgetown section of the coast. *Plat-eye prowl* is the vivid phrase for the depth of night when it is ill to be abroad.

Gullah English is full of picturesque, interesting words and phrases. Consider, for example, the following: *schemy; speckly; settle' 'ooman*, a woman of a certain age, not a flapper; *newfanglety; disgustuss; foot* for leg: "Deer hab long foot, him run fas'; Cootuh hab shawt foot, him trabble slow"; *buckra*, white man, then simply "white," as *buckra yam*, white potato, *buckra chalk*, white chalk; *altwo*, both, each; *peruse*, to saunter, walk slowly, "Da' gal him bin peruse 'long de road, en 'e nebbuh study 'bout nutt'n"; *ractify*, first "to break," as "Da' buggy ractify," then "to become confused" (mentally), "Da' 'ooman ractify een 'e min'"; *gunjuh* (from gingerbread), the scalloped molasses cakes sold in stores; *Mass, Mas*, (Master) when used with the name: *Mass' John, Mass' Rafe; maussuh* when used without the name, as "Da' muh maussah";* also *Maussuh Jedus*, but *Mastuh* for God alone. *Ox*, plural, "two ox"; *oxin*, singular, "one oxin." *Specify*, to make *good*, usually in the negative *cyan' specify*, can't make good; of a poor wife, "she cyan' specify"; of trousers, "de britchiz bus', 'e yent specify."

Quizzit, to ask, to question.

[535] *To shout*, not used of exclamation or outcry but of a peculiar religious dance" of the primitive Negro Christians

[539] Whoga, whoga, whogalor, da humharnorta, sundundilly?
Coo me sormher norty sundondilly isdelarun.
("De Tiger an' de Nyung Lady.")

Oluwia! Oluwia!
Odatle-tie-tie!
(De Wolf, de Rabbit an' de Whale's Eggs.)

*"Mass' Sam tell we ol' Maussa say, 'Sen' Mass' Henry bat-o home."
Pennett, II, 6.

[533] "For an exposition of the "shout song" see Johnson, *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*, Preface, 32-35; and for a first-hand description see *Slave Songs of the United States*, XII-XV, taken from the N. Y. *Nation*, May 30, 1867.
Compare Dorothy Scarborough, *On the Trail of Negro Folk-Songs*, Harvard University Press, 1925, p. 269.

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marked by ecstatic motion and hysterical physical rhythms.

Too in the sense of "very."

Sometime, inconstant, unsure: "Dem nyoung gal is a sometime t'ing."

Nyam, in the sense of eat."

Lahgin', and *swongger*, to assume self importance, to put on airs. Both of these seem pure Negro, unless the first is from 'largin', enlarging (?); and the second from swagger, compare swank.

Mongkey-nut for cocoa-nut, probably from the resemblance of the hairy nut to a brown monkey's head.

Soon for early, as a *soon brukwuss*, a *soon staa't*, a *soon man*. Thence, as noted by Mr. Bennett,[33] arises the first division of the Negro's day; *soon er mo'nin'*; after which follows *fus' fowl-crowin'*, *day-clean*, *sun-up*, *fus' an' las' ho'n blowin'*, *fo'noon res'*, *attanoon*, *de sun duh lean*, *de sun duh lean fuh down*, *sun-down*, *deep-dus'*, *ebenin'*, *can'le-lightin'*, *night-time*, *platt-eye prowl*, and *hag-hollerin'*."[34]

Phrases

Crack 'e bret' (or *crack 'e teet'*), crack his breath or teeth, i.e., say something.

Long-mout', surly or contemptuous pushing out of lips.

Shut-mout' (adj.) or *tie up 'e mout'* (verb), secretive, ill-natured, not saying anything.

Onrabble 'e mout', unravel his mouth, i.e., loosen up in conversation.

W'ich en' w'y talk, which and why talk, i.e., contradictory, inconsistent talk.

She-she talk, used of feminine loquacity. This phrase looks, by the way, like a correct use of the feminine gender,

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[33] Mr. Williams' suggestion is that *nyam* comes from *yam tetter* (yam potato) with intrusive *n* before *y* sound. Williams, *De Ole Plantation*, *VI*. An improbable derivation. Professor W. A. Craigie derives it from African *nyam*—to eat: *n'yam*—food, and compares Portuguese African *inhame*—the yam.

[34] I, 342.

[154] [175]

[34] Midnight. Hags are witches, and platt-eyes diabolical spirits of the mist. *Loc cit.*, 342.

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192 Bob, dat's a regular Baptis' match—'e wunt bow 'e head in none but 'e own house,"—referring to the Close Communion of the Baptists.

802 The ordinals, second, third, etc., are expressed by *two-time, three-time,* etc., or simply by the cardinals, as *two Chuesday, two T'ursday, two place,* the "second Tuesday, Thursday, place."

Proverbs

538 Tek care bettuh mo'nuh baig paa'd'n (To take care is better than to beg pardon), An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

If yo play wid puppy, 'ee lick yo face, Familiarity breeds contempt.

Cut finguh 'f'aid axe, A burnt child dreads the fire.

A still calf git de mores' milk.

Long talk ketch run'way nigguh.

Slow walkin' mek quick lickin'.

Yaas, bubbuh, uh haa'kee, but uh yent yeddy (Yes, brother, I hearken but I don't hear, i.e., I hear what you are saying, but I'm not paying any attention to it).

T'ief is bad, but t'ief en' ketch iz de debble (To steal is bad, but to steal and get caught is the devil).

Little axe cut down big tree."

Ef yo ent hab hoss to ride, ride cow, Half a loaf is better than no bread.

'E yent matter 'bout de road, so long as 'e kah yo to de right place.

A good dog fuh ebryt'ing is good fuh nutt'n (Jack of all trades, master of none).

Po' buckra an' dog walk one pat' (The poor man and the dog walk the same path).

Mos' kill bud don't make soup (Most killed bird don't make soup).

A man ain't eny more dan a man (i.e., there's a limit to all things).

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554 "Mr. Gonzales describes an insignificant-looking darkey, Little Joe Fields, whose only claim to distinction was the fact that he was the father of twin boys. When ridiculed on account of his small size, Joe would swell with importance, grin expansively, and retort: "Ki! Little axe cut down big tree! You see dem two twin, enty? Dem duh *my own.*"

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539 191 Miss Beckwith is evidently right in assuming that this form of amusement represents "the breakdown into sport of an outworn belief in the claim by sorcerers to a knowledge of the language of beasts."

•192 Discovering an unsuspected connection with Africa in words which sound as though they might be English, but really aren't,[43] provides almost as much satisfaction as finding new songs or dances. Conservative Negroes still retain many of these words—particularly in the old songs—and such are passed on to Dr. Turner in the hope that he may know their meaning. From his *West-African Survivals in the Vocabulary of Gullah* I have learned much that has been an enigma to me in the past, but even Dr. Turner is puzzled by "giffy," which on Sapelo means damp. Years ago I heard the great blue heron in the marshes called "Poor Joe," and judged his lean body had given him his name. Not at all. *Podzo* is the name of a similar heron in Africa. We call a certain type of southern tortoise a "cooter." In the neighborhood of Timbuctoo its near relative is called a *kuta*. When I first visited the Georgia coast I heard the name "tackies" applied to the small wild horses found on the salt marshes of the sea islands of South Carolina and Georgia.[44] Now I find that *taki* is the West African name of a horse. The same with the "tabby" houses built for the slaves out of old oyster shells, sand, and cement (made from burning live oyster shells in pine cribs built for the purpose). In Africa the name for a house of similar construction is *tabax*. When a Southerner hears the word "tote" he knows that it means to carry; a very similar word, *tota*, from the Congo, means to pick up. Southern children know the "joggle board," or see-saw, but they do not know that the name comes from the West African word, *dzogal*, meaning to rise. In the old days you asked a colored woman where to find her husband. If she said at the "jook," it meant that he was in the rather ungodly place where drink was sold and good women were not supposed to go. According to the Vocabulary, *dzug* means "to misconduct oneself" and it is easy to see how "jook house," in the Gullah dialect, derived its name. In *Gentlemen, Be Seated*, Dailey Paskman and Sigmund Spaeth tell us that Africa possessed an instrument known as the *banjar* made of a large gourd

[43] *By this time I should be wary of laughing up my sleeve when the Negro uses such words—but white people are like this. My last nugget was found through Mrs. Cate's keen sight. I had told her of the amusing application of the horse breeder's term "in foal" to the condition of one of my singers. With a fresh eye, she spotted in Dr. Turner's Gullah Vocabulary the word "en(in)fo le" meaning "pregnant."*

[44] *These hardy little horses are said to be descendants of those left by the Spaniards in the thirteenth century.*

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192 with a neck of wood attached, and fitted with four strings.[45] A Georgian I know called her devoted colored nurse "Dah," which means mother in an African dialect. Many Southerners are familiar with the odd word *swanga* as applied to a proud, boastful Negro. They probably assume, as I did, that it is a corruption of "swagger," but like the word "shout" it is another African word that happens to sound something like one of ours. For the same reason such African names as *Sandi, Suki, Aba, Bina,* and *Beti,* that are quite similar to our diminutives, have passed unnoticed, while such names as *Pinda, Mandigo, Dembo, Sambo, Cudjo, Quash,* and the Arabic names on Sapelo arrest our attention.

192 252 171 The survival of African food names such as gumbo or okra (famous in New Orleans), *benne*[46] (that figures in Charleston's special candy), goobers or peanuts, suggests that African cooking methods as well as names survive in Southern kitchens. Much interesting material on this highly controversial subject has been furnished 114 192 191 by Herskovits in an article entitled "What Has Africa Given America?"[47] Of all who write about the Negro, I find the conclusions of this well-known anthropologist the most convincing. What he says on the subject of Negro music, on certain "musical" aspects of Southern speech, the survival of African idioms and pronunciation, and the impress on Southern white children of the courtesy instilled into them by their colored nurses ties up with my years of experience with the Negroes.

175 567 (192) It may be only a coincidence, but *mpinda* and *nguba* are both Congo names for peanut, and the Cater family, of Kelvin Grove, had a slave called Pinda, who was the daughter of their faithful Dembo.[48] Dembo's father was an African prince, to whom a gun was of greater value than a son—probably there was a surplus of the latter and a shortage of the former. At any rate Dembo was sold into slavery for a

[46] Cable tells us in "The Dance in Place Congo" that "for the true African dance . . . a sensual, devilish thing tolerated only by Latin-American masters, there was wanted the dark inspiration of African drums and the banjo thrump and strum." Perhaps this accounts for the banjo not being heard in Georgia—with its strictly English background.

(824) (961) [46] The tradition on St. Simon's is that once you plant benne, you must keep it up. "Old man Death'll catch you if you don't." If you are ill, you can at least throw it out the window and give it half a chance to grow.

[47] New Republic, September 4, 1935.

[48] Dembo was the "driver" who had charge of the other slaves under the white overseer. When the overseer killed his master, Thomas Cater, in the neighborhood of 1805, Dembo saved the life of Thomas' only son, Benjamin, and looked out for his young master's interests so whole-heartedly that he earned the hatred of the other slaves. When he died they buried him on the North Boundary of the plantation as far from their own graveyard as they could place him.

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CHAPTER THREE

Afro-American Shout Songs

535 There appears to be a difference of opinion regarding the use of the word
114 "shout" in designating the religious ring-dance, which was enjoyed during planta-
192 tion days after prayer meeting and church service. Formerly writers thought that the Negro used the word because dancing was so sinful that it was wise to avoid even the name. But Dr. L. D. Turner has discovered that the Arabic word *Saut* (pronounced like our word "shout"), in use among the Mohammedans of West Africa, meant to run and walk around the Kaaba. I believe he has provided the right explanation for the difference in the meaning of the word, as used by the whites and the blacks, for I have seen the Negroes do the holy dance around the pulpit in their churches in such a manner.

535 Shouting appears to be of two types: Along the coast of Georgia and South Carolina the most popular form is the ring-shout, in which a number of dancers move counter-clockwise in a circle. (Illustration 22.) Occasionally individuals are seen in church using the same rhythmic shout step. In North Carolina and Virginia, however, the solo performance is apparently the only form in use, and the ring-shout seems to be unknown.

535 Those who have traveled in Africa, and have seen native dancing, are con-
197 vinced that the shout of the American Negro is nothing more than a survival of an
198 African tribal dance, and that the accompanying chants in their form and melody are quite as typical of Africa as the dance itself.[1] It is recognized, of course, that the
(199) words of the Old Testament have been substituted by the Negro for those of his native land. When the slaves grew more familiar with the English language, they evolved the more complicated religious songs that are now popularly called spirituals.

[1] Records Nos. 6 and 10 of the series made in the Belgian Congo by the Demi-Roosevelt expedition are strikingly similar.

A, [For Illustration 22, see Category 535, plate facing p. 128--Analyst]

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two went fuh t'ief a cow," "Buh Lion nyam (ate) um 'all-two," etc. When referring to a particular month, the speaker says "de June mont'," "de Augus' mont'," etc.

Miscellaneous

There are many additional points which might be mentioned, but most of them are not particularly significant. However, there is one other feature of the grammar which is interesting and is characteristic of Gullah, namely, the interrogative *enty*. *Ain't* is usually *ent* in the dialect, and it is used just as white people use it. But the Negro has generalized *ain't it, ain't he*, etc., and has made *enty*, which he uses exactly like the French *n'est-ce-pas* and the German *nichtwahr*. Thus "'e gwine rain, enty?" "Oonah come tomorrow, enty?" "Dem was good apples, enty?" etc. The source of *enty* was the *ent, int, yent, yunt*, etc., which the English dialect speakers used for *isn't*. Since this word when used interrogatively was followed more frequently by *'e* (he) or *it* than any other words, the Negro really did not have to do much to the English dialect usage to achieve *enty*.[92]

VOCABULARY

Analysis of Gonzales' Glossary

It may seem that the English dialect paternity of Gullah has been unduly emphasized, but such is not the case. Indeed, it probably played an even larger part in the development of Gullah than has been indicated in this brief sketch.

A broad view of the nature of the Gullah vocabulary

[92] See *E. D. G.*, pp. 244, 273.

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•192 may be obtained by a statistical analysis of the largest published glossary available. Gonzales[93] has listed nearly 2,000 of the words most commonly used in the dialect in the Edisto Island region. If these words be divided arbitrarily into appropriate classes, the following distribution results:[94]

I. Standard English words pronounced in standard way or as in English dialect of 18th century...	92 per cent
II. Corruptions and mutilations of standard English words (some of these corruptions are no doubt of English dialect origin).....	6 per cent
III. Archaic and obsolescent English words.....	2 per cent
IV. African words .....Less than	0.5 per cent

A Partial List of Archaic and Provincial English Usages Surviving in the Dialect[95]

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192 The following list includes the most common archaic and provincial English words found in the dialect. A prolonged study would reveal several others, perhaps, but these are the most common. Few, if any, of these, however, occur exclusively in the Gullah, for in various other parts of this country many of these words survive either among Negroes or white people or both. Some are not used on St. Helena, as far as I can ascertain. The list is composed of words not now in general use, and words in general use but having an archaic meaning in the Gullah.

[93] *The Black Border*, Glossary, pp. 287-340.

[94] This distribution also holds good for Whaley's glossary of 1,500 words. Jones' glossary is relatively short, and most of his words are found in Gonzales' list.

[113] [95] For tracing the paternity of various Gullah words, *The English Dialect Dictionary*, Wright's *Provincial Dictionary*, Halliwell's *Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words*, and the *N. E. D. (New English Dictionary)* are invaluable.

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All two, both. Compare French, *tous les deux*.

Arey, either (*Nary*, neither). Also used extensively by illiterate Negroes and whites elsewhere.

Aunt, a term of respect for old people, as in English dialect. Usually pronounced *ant*. See *Uncle*.

Aw, used as a sort of exclamation meaning "for true," similar to the meaning "yes," which it had in English dialect.

Ax, ask. Not a Negroism, but used elsewhere, especially by the Southern white mountain people. Chaucer used *ax*, and it is still used in some of the English dialects. *Cf.* Old English, *acsian*, *axian*, etc.

Balmoral skirt, a kind of petticoat worn during Queen Victoria's reign.

Blan, a corruption of *belong*. *Belong*, in the sense of *ought*, is quite common among white people in the South Atlantic States. "I belong to be there by this time," "That costs more than it belongs to," etc. In the Gullah *belong* has this meaning but it also retains another meaning from English dialect, namely, to be accustomed to. In the past tense this is like "used to": "Him an' me blan go huntin' togedder."

Brawtus (sometimes spelled *broadus* or *brotus*), something extra, thrown in for good measure. "Take dat fuh brawtus," says a Negro mother as she applies a final and extra lick of the switch to her child's legs. It is strange that there should still be doubt as to the English paternity of *brawtus*, but there are still some who consider it African. The archaic English *brotts*, fragments, leavings, etc., seems to offer an explanation, although some are not satisfied with this.[96] If this is insufficient, there is the related word, *brotta*, a Lancashire word which many students have overlooked in *The English Dialect Dictionary*, meaning "a few drops, a small quantity, a little in addition." Add the dialect tendency to pluralize words of this kind and we have *brottas*, having the same meaning as *brawtus* used by the Gullah and other American Negroes.

[96] Professor Robert A. Law, of the University of Texas, wrote in *Texas and Southwestern Folklore*, 1927, p. 120: "I . . . consider it much more likely . . . that here we have another African word."

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•192 *Chance*, a quantity, a considerable amount. "I raised a right good chance o' potatoes," "I had a plenty to eat fuh suppuh, a good chance," etc.

Coz, cuz, cuz'n, etc., cousin, used as a form of address, as in Shakespeare's day.

Find, to supply with provisions, to keep one in victuals, etc.

Fo'punce chicken (also *seb'npunce chicken*), used to describe chickens of certain sizes.

Foreigner, anyone born outside St. Helena Island or whatever community the speaker lives in. Exactly the old Kent and Sussex usage: "In some parts of Kent all born in another parish are still called foreigners." *Prov. Dict.*, also *N. E. D.*

Frail, to beat, strike, whip. Also used elsewhere in the South by whites and Negroes. It originated in England from *flail* by the process of dissimilation.[96]

Gaum (or *gorm*), to smear one's face with grease, victuals, etc.

Gall (*gaul* in some glossaries), swamp. The *E. D. D.* lists as one meaning of *gall*, "wet, spongy land." It also lists *gault*, "wet, boggy land."

Gunjuh, ginger or molasses cookie.

Graff, to grab, grasp, grapple, seize.

Hippo, ipecac. Until rather recently this was in common use for ipecac, the full name of which is hippocachuana or hippechachuana. In a medical book published in this country as late as 1848, *hippo* appeared as the ordinary term for ipecac.[97]

Killick, an anchor of stone.

Larging, swaggering, putting on airs, etc. This may be from *enlarging*, or from the same *larging* used in England to mean "spending the money given in largess." The Cumberland, "He's gone a-larging," is pretty close to the Gullah usage. See *E. D. D.*

Limous (in the expression *limous cooter*), mud, muddy.

Make your manners, used by the Negroes as it was in England:

[96] See *E. D. G.*, §252.

[97] J. Hume Simons, *The Planter's Guide and Family Book of Medicine*, Charleston, S. C., 1848.

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"A command to a child to touch his hat or curtsey in the presence of superiors." Wright, *Prov. Dict.*

Meet, to find, to experience, to observe the existence of, etc. "Did oona meet a good time?" "I ain't meet dem t'ings w'en I been a boy." Also used by some of the white people of the low country.

Mought, may, might. Still heard also in the South among white people.

Nor, than. "Bettuh nuh" means "better than."

Nyam, to eat. Possibly an African word, but it has long been known in England. See below under *African Words*.

One, in the sense of alone, singly: "Me one, Lawd," means "I alone, Lord." Also used in place of the indefinite article. "Once deh been one mahn what had one fine cow."

Peruse, to saunter, walk leisurely; also to examine. The *E. D. D.* records a Herefordshire usage, meaning "to explore the fields or woods."

Piggin, a small wooden pail with one stave extended to serve as a handle.

Pit, put, all tenses.

Poke, sack, bag.

Pure, in the sense of fully, exceedingly, absolutely. "De pyo' nuttin' " is "absolutely nothing." "He pyo' love de gal."

Quills, pipes or stalks of reed, cane, etc.

Quizzett (sometimes *squizzet*), to quiz, to question closely. From the English dialectic *quiset* or *quisit*, "to ask prying questions," which is derived from the old verb *inquisite*, to inquire into.

Remoan, to remove. A good English dialect usage.

Shote, or *shoat*, a pig. Widely used in the South.

Soon, early, quick, etc. "A soon boat" is an early boat, "a soon man" is an alert, quick, man.

Sparrowgrass, asparagus. Sometimes thought to be a Negro corruption, but it is a well-known instance of popular etymology which came from England and is still to be found among illiterate Americans.

Start-naked, stark-naked. Professor Smith listed this with the

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•192 comment, "It is barely possible (but highly improbable) that *staa't* goes back to the older 'start' (steort), tail." But the *N. E. D.* states that *stark-naked* is an alteration of the older *start-naked*, i. e., *tail-naked*, and lists various usages from the 13th century down to recent times. *Start-naked* would then seem to be a direct descendant of the Anglo-Saxon *steort* after all.

Stepney, poverty, privation. "To keep ol' stepney from de do'," is to keep the wolf from the door. Not heard on St. Helena. Smith lists this word as possibly African, which is doubtful. *Stepney* is used in a restricted area,[97a] and it might represent an English usage which has never been noted in any dialect collection. The following is ventured as a possible explanation of the origin of the usage. *Stepney* is the name of an east London parish in which squalor and poverty prevail. *(Ency. Brit.)* *Stepney* or *stipone*, "a kind of sweet compound liquor drunk in some ill places in London in the summer time," (See Grose, *Classical Dict.*, and Wright, *Prov. Dict.*) probably took its name from the parish (See *N. E. D.*). It appears from this that *stepney* was associated with a low condition. Add to this the fact that it is used synonymously with *wolf* in "keep the wolf from de do'," and its English derivation seems fairly certain.

Swinge, to singe. Widely used by Negroes and by the white mountain people. Still in use in various parts of England.

Swanga (or *swonga)*, noun: swagger, a dashing air; adj.: swaggering, boastful, etc. This word has been considered African by certain writers, but it is quite possibly a dialect pronunciation of English *swank* or *swanky*, the latter being used as both noun and adjective with meanings that correspond to those of *swanga*, namely, "a strapping fellow" and "swaggering." (*Prov. Dict.* or *E. D. D.*). A parallel is found in the Gullah *teng* or *tang* for *thank*.

[804] *Task*, a survival of the plantation daily task of a quarter of an acre for each hand. It is also used as a linear measure (105 feet).

[97a] Since this was written Arthur Palmer Hudson has informed me that *stepney* is known in Mississippi.

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The Negro speaks of planting two *tas'* of potatoes, or judges that the river is about a *tas'* wide.

Titty (or tittuh), sister.

Toad, a young female dog.

Too, very. "I *too* sorry you gwine." "Lawd, dat gatuh *too* beeg!" exclaimed a Negro who was rowing me across the Edisto when he saw a large alligator near the boat. Also used in this sense by white people in the low country.

Tote, to carry.[98] This word, which is still widely used in the United States, has been the cause of much controversy. Some have attributed it to the Negro, others to the Indian. The English derivation seems so simple that it is not necessary to look elsewhere. In the South, where this word seems to have been used first in this country, *tote* means not merely to carry, but it implies "hefting," supporting or carrying something heavy. When *tote* began to get spread about by newspapers and periodicals, it was taken up by many people who did not appreciate its correct usage, and soon we were *toting* such light objects as books, papers, pistols, etc. This extension of the meaning of *tote* explains the reluctance of some scholars to accept an English derivation.

Totian, an Anglo-Saxon verb, has survived in England in various shades of meaning, the most common of which is to peep, to look out. Hence *tot hill*, a lookout place. *Tolt*, from Latin *tolle*,[99] to lift or remove, is probably the immediate precursor of our *tote* if not identical with it. The *E. D. D.* lists as one of the meanings of *tolt*, "to tilt, to raise up," cites a Warwickshire example, "Tolt it up a bit," and states that *tolt* is also

[98] The earliest written use of *tote* found in the U. S. is in a Virginia manuscript, 1677: "They were by Beverly comanded to go to work, fall trees and mawl and toat railes." Quoted in B. W. Green's *Virginia Word-Book*, also in *New English Dictionary*.

It is interesting to observe that in a grammar written by Rev. Brantley York (3rd ed., 1862) and used locally in North Carolina, "tote the wood" was listed as an Irish inaccuracy for "carry the wood" in a list of New England, Dutch, Irish, and general colloquial inaccuracies.

[99] *Tolt* is the name of a writ by which proceedings were removed or "lifted" from the Court Baron to County Court. See any good law dictionary.

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•192 pronounced *to't*. In Northampton *toddy* meant heavy or weighty. It seems likely that in some part of England *tote* was acquiring the sense of hefting or carrying a weighty object about the time of the settlement of America, and that Negroes and others not familiar with the restricted meaning of the word, enlarged its meaning to its present American form.

Touch, small amount, "a little bit." "Leave me a leetle tetch o' dat pie." "'E got a tetch o' de fevuh." Not exclusively Gullah.

To that, to that extent, so much that, etc. "If you want it to dat," if you want it that much.

Uncle, a term of respect for old men.

Use, to frequent or roam over a certain area, used especially of game, cattle, etc. Used by Spenser, Milton, Shakespeare, and others. Heard occasionally among whites in the South Atlantic States.

Yowe, ewe.

Two other words might be mentioned here, one derived from French, the other from the West Indian by way of Spanish. *Bateau*, a flat-bottomed row-boat, is much used in the Gullah. This word was introduced by the French Huguenots, who were an important factor in the settlement of South Carolina and Georgia. It also survives in other parts of this continent, especially in Louisiana and in the French portion of Canada. Another type of boat, the dug-out, is called *piragua*, pronounced *pattyauguh* by the Negroes. This came from a West Indian word,[100] which the Spanish have adopted in the form of *piragua* or *pirogue*.[101] The dialect pronunciation no doubt arises from an attempt to imitate the Spanish trill on the *r*, which gives it a slight *t* sound.

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[100] Rochefort, in his *Histoire Naturelle et Morale des Iles de l'Amerique*, Rotterdam, 1658, mentioned vessels used by the Caribs, "qu'ils nomment *Canos ou Pirogues*," p. 347.

[101] Still used in Florida.

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[191] would be looked upon by the plantation owners as interesting embellishments.

The following graph is offered as an illustration of the differences in pitch range and speed between Gullah and ordinary Southern white English speech. It is merely suggestive. The pitch differences are only relative, since it would require the use of phonophotography to discover the absolute ranges. The left-hand graph represents white speech, the right-hand, Negro speech.

1 SEC.
I don't know, mam.

0.6 SEC.
I ent know, mum.

African Words

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192 Tracing the etymologies of words supposed to be of African origin is anything but an easy task. Perhaps this is why some of the English dictionaries refrain from giving specific etymologies, merely saying that a certain word is "African," or "of African origin," or even omitting these remarks. On the other hand, some writers have been too quick to attribute certain words to Africa. The mere discovery that a word is used in Africa and is different from any known modern English word is not always sufficient evidence that the word is African or that it was brought into English by Negroes. One must not forget that for more than a hundred years before the American slave trade began, European explorers and traders, especially the Portuguese and the Dutch, had contact with various parts of the African coast, and that this made pos-

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sible (1) the borrowing of European words by the Africans and (2) the adoption of African words by the sailors and traders, the former process naturally being the more active of the two.

The history of a specific word will illustrate the difficulties involved. On St. Helena Island the word *malafee*,[117] meaning whiskey, is known to a few persons. It is supposedly of African origin. In fact, one dictionary[118] lists *malafu*, banana wine, and states that the word is African. Now, in medieval times there was a famous wine, malvesie, so named from Napoli di Malvasia, a town on the south coast of the Morea in Greece. It was sold in many ports, and its name was known in dozens of languages. In Dutch it was called *malvezy*, and this form came into English as *malvesie*. Chaucer mentioned "A Iubbe of Malveyse" in the *Canterbury Tales*.

The close relation between *f* and *v* made it easy for *malvesie* to become *malfesie*, and this form is very close to the St. Helena *malafee*. The name of the wine, however, was later changed in English from *malvesie* to *malmsey*, so that the old form was perpetuated only in oral language. It is certain that the old name was known to some of the English who colonized America. The word had also probably penetrated various African languages. The form *malafu*, attributed to Africa, has already been cited. In the Swahili (Zanzibar region) *m'lova* for drunk or intoxicated was reported in Browne's *Etchings of a Whaling Cruise*, 1846, p. 578.

[117] Noted by Mrs. Parsons in her *Folk-Lore of the Sea Islands*, p. xxi. For a possible West Indian parallel, see her *Folk Tales of Andros Island, Bahamas*, p. 20: *Malantee*.

[118] Funk and Wagnalls. No specific African language is mentioned, however, and nothing said as to the extent of the use of the word in America.

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Here, then, is a word known in England in Chaucer's day cropping out in various places centuries later. Its appearance among the Negroes of the Sea Islands has given rise to the supposition that it is of African origin, which was certainly not the case. The question then arises, might it not at least be of African provenience? Perhaps so, since the African forms are different from the English form: *m'la'va, mal'afee, malafu'* (sometimes *mala'fu*) as compared to *mal'vesie*. Still *mal'afee* could be an English dialectal pronunciation of *malvesie* and might have entered this country with the English. At any rate, this word affords an excellent illustration of the need for caution in the study of strange words found in American Negro speech.[119]

No better evidence of the almost complete assimilation of English language habits by the Negro can be found than the scarcity of English words of African origin. Various words have been thought to be of African extraction, but many of them have turned out to be archaic English[120] or to be derived from Spanish or Portuguese.[121] There have been, of course, numerous individual survivals, that is, instances in which one person would continue to use a word or two of his native African language, but these have not obtained any diffusion and have about disappeared.

[119] The dictionaries and grammars of various African languages have nearly all been compiled since 1800, and there had been plenty of time for the assimilation of European words by African tongues. I sometimes wonder if *buckra*, white man, said to be derived from the Efik of Old Calabar, where it meant a spirit or powerful being, might not have come from English *booger*, or a related word from English or some other European language.

[120] E.g., *brawtus*, meaning something extra, something in addition, thought by some to be African, is from English *brotts* or *brotta*. *Tote*, to carry, is also English. See list of archaisms above.

[121] E.g., *pickaniny* is from Portuguese, *pequenino*.

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For an African word to gain a regional diffusion in this country, it either had to designate some object which was familiar to a large proportion of the slaves but was new to the English settlers, or it had to be an expressive substitute for the name of some object already known to the white people. Words for certain plants like *okra*, *gumbo*, *yam*, *goober*, are examples of the first type. *Buckra*, for white man, and *cooter*, for terrapin, are examples of the second type.

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Several words now generally conceded to be of African origin were introduced to the white people in this country during slavery. The vegetable name, *okra*, is familiar to most people, its synonym, *gumbo*, a little less widely known; *yam* (potato) is in general use; *goober* (peanut) is common throughout the South, but its synonym, *pinda* or *pindar*, is less popular; *cooter* is known to the whites in most of the Southern states. All of these words are in use in the Gullah area today. In addition there are several which are practically confined to this area although occasionally found elsewhere in the lower South. *Buckra* is used in the low country, but the works of Gonzales and others have increased its literary diffusion of late. *Ki* as an exclamation is heard among the Negroes in most parts of the Gullah area. *Oona*[122] (*thou* or *you*) thought to be African, is common in the Gullah region.[123]

[122] Sometimes *yunnah*, *hunnah*, *wunnah*.

[123] Possible sources exist in several West African languages. In the Kuka or Yaw language, *thou* is *yini*. In the Somray *thou* is *yungar*. See Benton, *Notes on Some Languages of the Western Sudan*, p. 122. *Thou* is *yi*, *yo*, *yu*, *wo*, *wu*, etc., in several languages of Guinea and the Sudan. In Kol and in Gbaragba the second person plural is *wun*, in Kparabon it is *wuna*, in Bo it is *un*, in Troughon it is *wuno*. See Meillet and Cohen, *Les Langues du Monde*, section on "Langues de Soudan et de la Guinée." In Browne's *Etchings of a Whaling Cruise*, a vocabulary of Sowheli (or Swahili), the language of Zanzibar, is printed.

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•192 *Malafee* (whiskey) is used by a few people on St. Helena Island. As shown above, it is not of African origin, but may be of African provenience. In the Georgetown section *plat-eye* is used to signify a ghost or spook. Its etymology is uncertain, and it may be an instance of an Africanism surviving in a restricted area. It is not known on St. Helena Island; in fact it seems to be limited to a section around Georgetown.[124] *Yam* or *nyam* (to eat) is common in the Gullah. It is thought by some to be of African origin. It has been suggested that it comes from the noun *yam* (potato),[125] but this etymology is hardly satisfactory. James Platt, an English writer, derived it from the Fulah (or Ful) *nyami*, to eat.[126] It is interesting to note here that *yam*, meaning to eat heartily, has long been used in England. It is found in several English dialect glossaries,[127] as well as among the obsolete words in several unabridged English dictionaries, and nothing is said of its African origin. In the form *yam*, or *yum-yum*,[128] it is not at all rare among American white people today. Whether *yam*, or *nyam*, was passed from the Eng-

Oona means *you have; boona* means *are you?* or *have not you?* It is doubtful however, if many of our slaves came from the Zanzibar section. It is strange, I think, that no one has claimed that *me*, as used by the Negroes for the nominative of the first person singular, is of African descent. As a matter of fact, *me*, *mi*, etc., are much more common in the nominative of the first person singular in West African languages than are *oona*, *yunnah*, etc., in the second person. See *Les Langues du Monde*, various lists of pronouns in African languages.

[123] Since this was written, *plat-eye* has made its appearance in Roark Bradford's *This Side of Jordan*, a novel of Negro life on the lower Mississippi.

[124] Williams, *De Ole Plantation*, p. vi.

[125] "The Negro Element in English," *Athenaeum*, Sept. 1, 1900, p. 283.

[126] For example, in Grose, *Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue*, London, 3rd ed., 1796, also in the *E. D. D.* (under *yam*, *nyam*, *nyum*, *nyum-nyum*).

[127] In the Gullah, it is sometimes *nyam-nyam* for emphasis. Did the Negro get this usage from English, or did we get ours from him? In this connection, there is a group of tribes in Central Africa noted for their cannibalism, known as the Niam-Niam.

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lish to the Negro or from the Negro to the English is not known at present, but there is evidence that its ultimate derivation will prove to be African.[129] 192.

These words include all which are used throughout or in large sections of the Gullah area which have been shown to be of African derivation. The word *Gullah* itself might be added. In the Savannah section the word *Geechy* is similarly used to designate the Negroes of that region, and it seems likely that it came from the name of a river near Savannah, the Ogeechee.[130] Negroes in the vicinity of this river were called 'Geechy River Negroes, which was finally shortened to Geechy.[131]

It is probable that in this country the white man has been the medium of conservation and diffusion of these African words more than the Negro has. Some of the words were adopted by planters in the West Indies and were brought to South Carolina by those who migrated 124 192

[129] Smith states that Professor W. A. Craigie derives it "from African *nyam*—to eat: *n'yam*—food." This is not specific enough. I have examined vocabularies of about thirty West African languages, and only one has any word for eat which resembles *nyam*, viz., the Somray, *yamum*.

[130] Pronounced *Ogeechy*. Of Indian origin.

[131] Professor Smith lists *geechy* as *African*, but he refers to a different usage, namely, as an adjective in the sense of "goosey." I have never encountered *geechy* used in this sense. Smith lists several other words as possibly African (*Gullah*, pp. 32-3). These are *cymbi*, *kabalingo*, *swanga*, *guffer*, *geechy*, *yamyam*, *da*, *da-da*, *du-du*, and *Stepany*. I have seen no specific African derivations for any of these. None of these is used on St. Helena, as far as our research staff can ascertain, except *swanga*, meaning swaggering, boastful, etc. I think this is too close to our *swank*, *swankum*, *swagger*, etc., to need any other explanation. Words like *think* and *thank* are often pronounced in Gullah with more of a *g* sound than a *k* sound. This tendency would change the English dialectic 'swanky to *swangy* or *swanga*. Swanky has the same meaning as Gullah *swanga*, namely "swaggering" (adj.) and "a strapping fellow" (noun). See Wright, *Provincial Dictionary*, also *English Dialect Dictionary*. *Da* and *da-da* are possibly dialect pronunciations of *there*, *that there*. Smith's list was compiled from various sources, and it was not always possible for him to get definite information as to meanings, pronunciations, etc.

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174 from the West Indies. The variety of African language
• 192 groups and the conditions of slavery were such that it was difficult for any particular African word to survive over a large area through its use by slaves alone. But here and there planters would observe certain native words used by a few individuals to designate well known objects like terrapins, peanuts, etc., and they would take up these words in their conversations with slaves. Then, finding that other planters had encountered similar words, they began to use the best known ones in everyday speech and in writing, thus giving them a sound basis for survival. Then, too, there is the probability that a few African words were introduced directly into English by white sailors and traders who had picked them up in the various slave stations on the African Coast.

Naturally enough, in Englishing certain African words, the Southern white man has added an *r* to the spellings so that it will be seen and not heard. He writes *cooter, goober, pindar,* but as a rule he pronounces them as the Negroes do, their African originals being *kudu, gingooba,* and *mpinda.*

THE PERSISTENCE OF GULLAH

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177 Smith has attributed some of the characteristics and
178 the persistence of Gullah to the native quality of the "Gullah tribesmen." He thinks that "their resolute and persistent nature evidently assisted in impressing their dialectal characteristics on weaker and more plastic Negroes from elsewhere brought in contact with them, and definitely fixed for two hundred years the tonality of the Negro dialect of the Carolina and Georgia Coast."[132]

[132] *Gullah,* p. 8.